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THE SPRING EXHIBITIONS.

THE hard times, although keenly felt by the artists, have in no wise diminished the activity that usually reigns in the studios on the eve of the annual exhibition, and the artists are busy with pictures for one or both of the exhibitions that are to open in April. The younger men will generally exhibit in both the Academy and the American Art Galleries, but the older artists will generally confine their exhibits to the Academy, not only because it is their own institution, but because they refuse to submit their works to the judgment of a jury whom they deem incompetent to decide upon the relative merits of works of Art. The leading foreign artists thoroughly feel the dignity of their profession and what is due to it, and would never consent to such a jury as is here proposed, and it is strange that many of our artists who have studied or are studying abroad should not have learned this all-important lesson from their masters. If such a thing would not be countenanced in Europe why should it be in this country? Are the laymen of America relatively better educated in Art than those of Europe? We think not. It seems to be taken for granted that our artists are as poor in spirit as they are reputed to be in money, and that for a little of the "vile trash" they will humiliate themselves, where bodies of physicians, lawyers, poets, musicians and scientific men would stand firm upon their professional dignity. If we wish our calling respected we must first respect it ourselves.

It is said that the large amount of money will atone for the indignity that is offered to the profession; not that any such indignity is intended, for we believe that the prizes are given from a sincere desire to encourage our artists to their best efforts; but the way in which it is done is a great mistake. As we advised in our last issue, if this *prize fund* could be changed into simply a *purchase fund*, there would not be the slightest objection to its being managed and awarded by a lay committee.

Because we object thus strongly to lay judgments of professional work, we have no quarrel with laymen; but on the contrary have every feeling of respect and friendship for them—our nearest relatives and friends are amongst them; it is by their support that we live, and we are pleased and encouraged when they like our works, even when the approval is not backed by a purchase. Many of them have more taste and more knowledge of Art than many professional artists; but all this does not qualify them to give judgment in this proposed competition. In such a case, where there will be such a variety in the subjects of the pictures, as well as in the stand-points taken by the painters in their treatment, the most gifted and learned artists might easily be at fault in deciding which one was absolutely the best.

The Academy showed its wisdom in having the awards of the Clark and Hallgarten prizes made by the votes of all of the exhibitors, in which the vote of the artist whose little flower piece is hung high in the corridor, is equal to that of the painter of the picture that has the place of honor in the main gallery. The decision of such a jury does not really

decide anything, and is not intended to, except the disposition of the money that is offered.

But there is another plan of the American Art Galleries which we heartily commend; it is that of maintaining a permanent exhibition of American pictures. There has been a great need of this for years, which the Art Union endeavored to supply; but the location selected was an unfortunate one that found no favor with either the members or the public, and was abandoned after the expiration of the lease. But the American Art Galleries are well located, are easy of access, and most tastefully fitted up. Pictures will there be seen at their best, and we hope that the permanent exhibition will secure the support of the artists and the public, and abundantly reward the enterprise of the proprietors.

THE REASON WHY.

WE frequently see pictures with the Salon numbers on their frames, and are sometimes told that they were accorded places of honor in that exhibition. These two facts have been thrust onto our consciousness as positive proofs of the superior merits of pictures which to our unprejudiced judgments have seemed to be of very inferior quality. The following experience, related by Couture in his "Conversations on Art," will give an insight into the way such matters are managed in France.

It inflicts a sad blow to the traditional reverence we have entertained for French management of art exhibitions. However, it must be borne in mind that the officials who have the immediate charge of the arrangement of the pictures are not artists (for we do not believe that these, even in France, could be bribed). Although the most prominent of them, who are in power, are of course around occasionally, we see that their own pictures and those of their friends are well placed.

Couture relates that, meeting a former pupil, who was a very wealthy man, and telling him of his discouragements in finding all of the good places in the Salon given to others, was told by him that he did "not know how to get good places."

They went together to the ante-room of the Exhibition, and his friend said to him: "Go to that man and say to him, 'I have brought a picture here marked 334; if by chance you are able to have it well placed, I shall be much obliged to you,' and leave in his hand ten francs."

"I obeyed him, doing the same by each one of the assistants. Pointing out another, he said: 'To that one you must give twenty francs, he is the chief.' Eight days after the Exhibition opened; I had a superb place, and obtained my first public success."

THE Trustees of the Smithsonian Institution showed their appreciation of professional judgment on Art work, by submitting the works of the students to Messrs. J. Q. A. Ward, N. A., L. E. Wilmarth, N. A., and J. G. Brown, N. A. The same course has been followed for many years by the Cooper Union.